

LEHI MEETINGHOUSE

Constructed: 1855-1860

Address: 100 West 100 South

Present owner of site: LDS Church

In 1855 Lehi Ward Bishop Evans announced plans to erect a new meeting house to replace the old log one. The site for the new structure was the southwest corner of present First South and Second West, then the center of Lehi's fort. A committee, including James Harwood as assessor and collector, was appointed under the chairmanship of Daniel S. Thomas. A community-wide tax of \$1.50 per \$100 valuation was assessed. One dollar was to be paid in labor and 50c in grain.

Some men worked off their labor assessment felling trees in West Canyon. The saw timber was then taken to mills in alpine and processed into planks, shingles, joists, pillars, and other needed lumber. Additional workers labored in the limestone quarry at Zion's Hill on the Lake Mountains. Hundreds of tons of rock were required for the building's massive sixty-by-forty-foot foundation. Most men, however, worked in the adobe pits south of the present Lehi Roller Mills where thousands of the sun-baked bricks were required for the eighteen-inch thick walls.

The construction of the Meeting House required five years. Everything was made locally except the glass and hardware items, which were freighted from the East. By the fall of 1855 the building was beginning to take form.

Although all men in the ward were required to work on the building, the craftsmen who actually supervised the project included adobe makers William W. Taylor, William B. Rigby, and Abel Evans; masons J. Wiley Norton and a Mr. Howe; carpenters Thomas Ashton, Lorenzo Hatch, and Hyland D. Wilcox; and plasterer William Clark.

The building was finally finished in the fall of 1860, though it was never formally dedicated. The main entrance to the Meeting House fronted to the east on Second West. Double doors opened into a twelve-by-forty-foot anteroom. A

stairwell to the gallery and the second-story school and prayer room was in the south end of the anteroom.

The auditorium was forty-eight by thirty-six feet. The ceiling and second floor were supported by eight twenty-foot pillars which were arranged so that the first two on the east supported the gallery and the last two on the west defined the speakers stand and the pulpit.

A large pot-bellied stove provided the auditorium's heat though, unfortunately, only the immediate area surrounding the stove offered real warmth in the dead of winter. This spot was reserved for the ward's elderly women, their personal rocking chairs arranged around the stove.

The building's seating capacity was five hundred, including the gallery. This "balcony," as many church members called it, was primarily for the choir's use. Above the gallery and auditorium was a second-story attic area which contained two rooms. The largest was used for school until the 1863 completion of the Southwest School (Thurman). It also served for a time as the city council chamber. The smaller room was called the Quorum or Prayer Circle Room because of the special Priesthood functions held there.

In 1903 when Lehi was divided into four ecclesiastical wards, the Meeting House became the chapel of the new Lehi First Ward. In 1915 the old Thurman School, which stood just a few feet west of the Meeting House, was remodeled into a ward amusement hall. The partition dividing the building into two rooms was removed and a maple floor laid. A musician's stand was erected in one end, and the \$600 project became a dance hall. From 1936 until 1949, major renovations were made in the building. The old Meeting House was converted into an amusement hall. The pillars, balcony, and partition wall near the front entrance were removed and a stage was built on the west end. This remodeling project combined the Meeting House and the historic Thurman School into a single building. A new chapel was built to the south.

In 1972 the entire building, including the Meeting House was demolished. A new \$361,000 chapel was completed on this site. The following year the local Sons of the Utah Pioneers, under the direction of Virgil Peterson, dedicated a historical marker on the site of the original Meeting House.

